



# CO-DESIGN: QDN PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES

Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) is a state-wide network of people with diverse disability from communities across Queensland. Our motto is ‘nothing about us without us’ and this is central to the way we work and co-design. We believe that people with disability need to be included from the beginning in the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of services, policy, and products.

Co-design is a key process when done well, and effectively means that people with disability are meaningfully, equally, and authentically collaborating to co-design solutions that deliver quality outcomes, and lead and influence inclusive positive change.

## QDN’s Principles of Co-Design

- Authentic Voice
- Respect
- Rights
- Resilience
- Collective Action

### Authentic Voice

The voice of people with disability is present, strong, included, and valued as part of the co-design process.

The authentic voice is an honest expression of one’s own personal perspective, freely given, well informed, and supported with good processes. A co-design process has integrity when the voice of people with disability is incorporated, their feedback is presented accurately and in context, contributions acknowledged and when excluded – this is transparent and an explanation about why given.

## Respect

The co-design process respects people with disability valuing individual capacity and diversity. People are provided the support needed to engage fully, materials being provided in a useful format with time to read, reflect, and ask questions, payment for time engaged, support for travel, an appropriately paced agenda, and timely, fulsome feedback. Respect means that people are consulted before decisions are made not after, and do not ask people with disability to make choices about inaccessible or inferior options.

## Rights

Co-design is underpinned by human rights and needs to:

- safeguard people against harm, with awareness of current and future potential consequences of their engagement
- include the right for people with disability to have a say, to be heard, to question, to withdraw consent, and to abstain from giving input
- identify, avoid, and call out tokenism in engagement and co-design processes
- declare if it is not possible to fully engage people around an issue and hold an information session rather than name it a full engagement co-design process.

## Resilience

As people with disability, we co-design ideas and solutions to lead and influence change, and are here for the long term.

We believe it is important to acknowledge that people's experience of engagement can expand or diminish a person's confidence in having a say. A positive experience will build skill, the ability to adapt to different groups of people and issues, to problem-solve, to connect with others, and ultimately, to disrupt and influence the issues that matter.

It is important that as part of good co-design processes, people are supported to think through the consequences of speaking up. Where there is reasonable potential for a negative personal consequence of speaking up, then thought should be given to processes used, de-identification, and attention to safe-guarding measures.

## Collective Action

Good co-design brings people to work together in a way that enables everyone to bring different experiences, values, and wisdom to the table. People come together for a shared purpose but do not have to reach the same point of view. Collectively people can contribute where they are at and in areas that interest them. People are well-informed and supported in a way that helps people build their individual and collective capacity to engage. The process is designed and delivered in an inclusive way that meets the needs and preferences of the individual participants.

## QDN's Co-design processes

QDN believes that co-design is best delivered when it is underpinned by QDN's five principles and works through the following nine steps:

1. **The starting place** – craft the question that reflects intent/purpose and invites inquiry
2. **Build the team** – get diversity and support inclusion
3. **Discovery Phase** – see the issue from different viewpoints, perspectives, and ways. Hear from others including those who aren't connected or disagree
4. **Pause and reflect** – take time to pause and reflect on what you have learnt in the discovery phase, what you still don't know before jumping to solutions
5. **Sense-making** – look at the data, story, research, and evidence in their raw form and work together to make sense and meaning of what has been gathered
6. **Generate options** – stage where sense-making starts to yield conclusions, ideas and possibilities, and people get in the creative zone
7. **Developing prototypes** – generate as many ideas as possible and develop a working example of the policy, service, program, product, or scenario-based solution
8. **Learning, reworking, and refining** – part of the learning cycle and reworks can produce 'prototype' – the solution for testing, piloting, or putting into action
9. **Imbed what works** – turn it into action and make it real. Keep people engaged and stay accountable.